

ELEMENTS OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN THOMAS KING'S "GREEN GRASS, RUNNING WATER"

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ABSTRACT

Thomas King's novel "Green Grass, Running Water" stands as a masterful exploration of intertextuality, seamlessly weaving together a rich tapestry of cultural, literary, and historical references. Drawing from Native American mythology, biblical narratives, classic literature, and popular culture, King crafts a narrative that challenges, subverts, and expands upon traditional storytelling conventions. The novel's characters engage in dialogues with iconic figures, reinterpreting historical events and embodying a metafictional awareness that adds layers of complexity to the novel. Through intertextuality, King critiques cultural stereotypes, addresses the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities, and invites readers to navigate the intricate intersections of Indigenous and Western cultures. This article provides a glimpse into the diverse intertextual elements within the novel, highlighting how King's narrative serves as a profound commentary on storytelling, identity, and the ongoing dynamics between different cultural traditions.

Keywords: Indigenous people, metafictional elements, biblical allusion, mythology, historical events, popular culture, colonialism, reference

ЭЛЕМЕНТЫ ИНТЕРТЕКСТУАЛЬНОСТИ В РОМАНЕ ТОМАСА КИНГА "ЗЕЛЕНАЯ ТРАВА, БЕГУЩАЯ ВОДА"

АННОТАЦИЯ

Роман Томаса Кинга "Зелёная трава, бегущая вода" представляет собой мастерское исследование интертекстуальности, переплетая богатую мозаику культурных, литературных и исторических ссылок. По мотивам мифологии коренных американцев, библейских повествований, классической литературы и популярной культуры Кинг создаёт повествование, которое вызывает интерес, подменяет и расширяет традиционные литературные конвенции. Персонажи романа вступают в диалог с иконическими фигурами, переосмысливают исторические события и воплощают в себе метафизическое сознание, добавляя слои сложности повествованию. Через интертекстуальность Кинг критикует культурные стереотипы, затрагивает влияние колониализма на коренные общины и приглашает читателей исследовать запутанные пересечения коренных и западных культур. Эта статья предоставляет обзор разнообразных интертекстуальных элементов в романе, подчеркивая, как повествование Кинга служит

глубоким комментарием к искусству рассказа, идентичности и постоянным взаимодействиям различных культурных традиций.

Ключевые слова: коренные народы, метафизические элементы, библейская аллюзия, мифология, исторические события, популярная культура, колониализм, референция

TOMAS KINGNING “YASHIL O‘T, OQAR SUV” ROMANIDAGI INTERATSTUALLIK ELEMENTLARI

ANNOTATSIYA

Tomas Kingning “Yashil o‘t, Oqar suv” asari matnlararo ma‘noni mohirona tadqiq qilib, madaniy, adabiy va tarixiy ma‘lumotlarning boy mozaikasini bemaolol birlashtirgan. Amerika mahalliy mifologiyasi, bibliya rivoyatlari, klassik adabiyot va ommabop madaniyatdan kelib chiqqan holda, King an'anaviy adabiy konventsionalarni qo‘llab hikoyani yaratadi. Roman qahramonlari timsollar bilan muloqotga kirishadi, tarixiy voqealarni qayta talqin qiladi va metafiksatsion ongni gavalantiradi, hikoyaga murakkablik qatlamlarini qo‘shadi. Intertekstuallik orqali King madaniy stereotiplarni tanqid qiladi, mustamlakachilikning mahalliy jamoalarga ta'sirini ko'rib chiqadi va o'quvchilarni mahalliy va G'arb madaniyatlarining murakkab chorahalarini o'rganishga taklif qiladi. Ushbu maqola romanning turli intertekstuallik elementlarining umumiy ko'rinishini taqdim etadi va King asarida, o'ziga xoslik va turli madaniy an'analarning davom etayotgani va o'zaro ta'siriga chuqur sharh sifatida xizmat qilishini ta'kidlaydi.

Kalit so'zlar: mahalliy xalqlar, metafiksatsion elementlar, Injil tashbehi, mifologiya, tarixiy voqealar, ommaviy madaniyat, mustamlakachilik, ma'lumotnoma

INTRODUCTION

Intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts refer to and draw upon other texts, either explicitly or implicitly. Thomas King's novel "Green Grass, Running Water" is rich in intertextual elements, incorporating a variety of literary, cultural, and historical references. King weaves traditional Native American myths and storytelling techniques into the narrative. The novel features characters from various Native American traditions, and their stories often parallel or intersect with traditional myths. There are numerous biblical allusions throughout the novel. King uses biblical themes and narratives to comment on contemporary issues, often employing satire and humor to critique the impact of Western ideologies on Indigenous cultures. King incorporates references to classic literature, including works by William Shakespeare and James Fenimore Cooper. These references serve both to engage with Western literary traditions and to subvert or reinterpret them from an Indigenous perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a few researchers studying intertextuality in Thomas King's novel "Green Grass, Running Waters". Most often academic analyses and scholarly discussions on King's work often involve experts in Indigenous literature, postcolonial studies, and literary criticism.

Researchers and scholars who specialize in these fields have explored the intertextual aspects of King's novel.

Western mythology relies on its presumed supremacy. This reliance is found in both biblical and contemporary cowboy mythology. The tension in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* derives from the idea that Western myths that glorify white heroes and vilify Native Americans provide no support for the modern Native characters in the text. In "Coyote Fixes the World: The Power of Myth in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*," Thomas Matchie and Brett Larson argue that King attempts to ameliorate this tension not through denying Western myth's power, but rather by revising some of the major myths so that Native characters have a voice and are heroes: "Thomas King thinks we ought to challenge some of these, like the old cowboy myth which most western movies and TV series continue to perpetuate [...] the four mythic characters and Coyote enter into the realistic plot, [and] travel to the Alberta reserve to "fix up the world"¹. King acknowledges myth's power. However, he also realizes that if myth tells people that their destiny is to be subservient and/or die, the power becomes corrupt. King underscores this corruption with the Native Lionel wanting to be John Wayne, but ultimately still stuck at his job as a television salesman, spreading Western hero myths rather than being a hero himself. King chooses three major Western biblical myths—the creation myth, the garden myth, and the flood myth—and revises them with a Native woman as the focal character instead of a white man. Additionally, he takes the cowboy myth, one infamous for its mistreatment and stereotyping of Native Americans, and reinterprets it so that Portland Looking Bear and his men kill John Wayne and Richard Widmark. Through intertextuality, King revises these myths to create ground so that the modern characters can become the heroes of their own narratives, making Lionel a Native John Wayne when he confronts George Morningstar. King revises major biblical and contemporary myths through intertextuality, creating a world where the Native characters of *Green Grass, Running Water* can become the heroes of their own narrative.

King plays with the concepts of intertextuality and myth being perceived as true in his narrative. In the book *Primal Myths*, Barbara Sproul explains myth's impact on people: "Who are we? Why are we here? [...] [Myths] organize the way we perceive facts and understand ourselves and the world"². Myths have power because they are seen as truth despite any outlandish feats on the characters' parts, thus providing instruction for people about how to act in society and defining identity.

By combining the cowboy and creation myths while also merging myth and modern narrative, King creates an intertextual story where Native characters are the victors. While the cowboy myth may be shown "again and again in the mainstream media," through revising the ending for a heroic Native myth, the effects this revised film has on the Native characters is immediate.³

¹ Matchie, Thomas, and Brett Larson. "Coyote Fixes the World: The Power of Myth in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*." New York: *North Dakota Quarterly* 1996: 153-168

² Sproul, Barbara. "Introduction." *Primal Myths*. New York: Harper Collins, 1979. 1-29

³ Lousley, Cheryl. "'Hosanna Da, Our Home on Natives' Land': Environmental Justice and Democracy in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*." *Essays On Canadian Writing* 81, 2004: 17-44

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The novel is filled with references to popular culture, including movies, television shows, and music. These references serve to highlight the ways in which Indigenous cultures intersect with and are influenced by mainstream popular culture. King draws on historical events, particularly those related to the treatment of Indigenous peoples, to provide context for the novel's themes. The novel engages with the impact of colonialism and the ongoing struggles of Indigenous communities. The character of Coyote in the novel draws on traditional Native American mythology, where Coyote is often a trickster figure. Coyote's actions and interactions with other characters reflect the mischievous and transformative qualities associated with this mythological figure. The flood imagery in the novel, particularly the recurring motif of water, alludes to the biblical story of Noah's Ark. This intertextual reference provides a framework for understanding the novel's themes of renewal, cleansing, and the potential for rebirth. The characters in the novel engage in conversations about classic literature, such as William Shakespeare's works. For example, the character Lionel Red Dog's obsession with Hamlet is a literary reference that adds depth to his character and serves as a commentary on the intersection of Indigenous and Western cultures. The character Babo, who works at the Dead Dog Café, reflects the influence of popular culture. The café itself is a nod to the popular radio show "Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour," hosted by Thomas King. This intertextual element incorporates humor and satire into the narrative.

The novel references historical events, such as the displacement of Indigenous peoples and the impact of residential schools. These historical intertextual elements provide a backdrop for the contemporary struggles faced by the characters and their communities.

The novel contains metafictional elements, including characters who are aware of their roles in a story and occasionally break the fourth wall. These moments of self-awareness contribute to the novel's overall commentary on storytelling and the power dynamics inherent in shaping narratives.

The novel engages in a dialogue with James Fenimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans⁴." King both references and revises elements of Cooper's work, offering a subversive perspective on the portrayal of Indigenous characters in classic Western literature. The use of pop culture icons like Superman and Batman in the novel contributes to its playful and irreverent tone. These references provide a lens through which King explores issues of power, heroism, and identity in both Indigenous and mainstream contexts. The novel features multiple narrative threads that intersect and overlap, creating a complex web of interconnected stories. This structure is a form of intertextuality in itself, as the various narratives mirror and comment on each other, enriching the overall reading experience.

Characters like Columbus, who appears in the novel, are reinterpreted to challenge the traditional Eurocentric narratives surrounding historical figures. King's treatment of Columbus reflects a critical perspective on the impact of colonialism on Indigenous cultures.

The stories told by the characters within the novel often contain literary allusions and references. For instance, the retelling of creation stories or family histories incorporates elements from various literary and cultural traditions, highlighting the diverse influences

⁴James Fenimore Cooper. *The Last of the Mohicans*. – New York: Bantam Classics, 1982

shaping the characters' lives. The novel's structure and narrative flow often resemble the layout of comic books. This intertextual choice not only aligns with the novel's playful tone but also comments on the visual and narrative conventions of popular culture.

These additional examples showcase the depth and diversity of intertextuality in "Green Grass, Running Water," emphasizing how Thomas King skillfully incorporates a wide range of cultural, literary, and historical references to create a rich and nuanced narrative.

In conclusion, the examination of elements of intertextuality in Thomas King's "Green Grass, Running Waters" reveals a literary masterpiece that transcends conventional boundaries, inviting readers and scholars alike into a rich tapestry of cultural, literary, and historical references. Through a careful interweaving of Native American mythology, biblical allusions, literary references, pop culture, and metafictional elements, King crafts a narrative that challenges preconceptions and expands the boundaries of storytelling. The literature review underscores the depth and complexity of King's intertextual approach, demonstrating its significance in contributing to discussions in Indigenous literature, postcolonial studies, and literary theory. The incorporation of diverse cultural and historical elements allows the novel to serve as a critical commentary on issues such as colonialism and cultural identity.

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